3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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stones. It is covered with green leaves and earth and steamed for an hour or more. With the "true food" is served a dish consisting of fish, if possible, and edible green leaves boiled in coconut cream. The ingredients for the boiled dish are gathered and prepared in large imported iron pots by the women. Formerly earthenware pots made in Lau were used, but pots are no longer made.[2] Without fish the meal is considered very poor indeed.

Most families have sufficient initiative to cope with the food problem in years of normal rainfall, so that the islands are practically self-sufficient. But when a violent hurricane sweeps over the islands, destroying harvests and habitations—or a long, searing drought withers the crops—even the coarsest edible jungle roots will not cover the needs of the famine island inhabitants, who would starve without the rice and flour which are rushed to their aid by the colonial government in Suva. Such a hurricane occurred in 1936.

Fortunately catastrophes of this kind do not occur often, but drought is a constant menace. Rain is quickly absorbed through the sharp, porous limestone. There are no streams and only a very few water holes, which are usually brackish. Practically all the fresh water used by the natives must be collected in tanks and wooden bowls from roofs of imported sheet iron or of thatch. The natives, however, require amazingly little fresh water. They drink the sweet milk of the young coconut, steam their food in the earth oven or boil it in coconut cream, and bathe in the sea. Only since they have donned *lavalavas* of cloth have they needed fresh water for laundering. The government has aided the natives in building small cement reservoirs roofed with sheet iron for each village, but the natives are so little concerned with the lack of fresh water that they do not repair the reservoirs, and few of them are in use.

[2] L. Thompson, "The Pottery of the Lau Islands, Fiji," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1938.

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291 rank. Outside a village the natives often wind a piece of cloth about their heads as a protection against the sun. Hats are not worn.

292 For Sunday services in the mission church, and ceremonies in honor of visiting British officials on Kambara, the men tuck a clean white shirt into the *lavalava* and the women don [294] a simple sleeveless blouse. Clothes are sewn on a few sewing machines which found their way to the islands during the prosperous days of the copra trade. Lately the natives have [435] had some difficulty in keeping themselves clothed on account of the low price of copra which they exchange for cloth at the local store in Tokalau. Clothes are usually very ragged, especially those of the old people, and occasionally instead of trade cloth a gunny sack or a fringe of banana leaves is worn while working in the gardens.

296 The introduction of cloth brought a laundry problem to 312 Kambara, an island where fresh water has always been scarce. At the present time most of the fresh water collected on Kambara and also the brackish water from the springs is used for washing clothes. Soap, bluing and heavy charcoal irons for pressing must be bought at the store. On Saturday mornings the young girls wash near the water barrels under the eaves. Beating the clothes with a stick against a board, they raise a billowing froth of rainbow-hued suds to make up for lack of water.

515 Considering the rough close-to-nature existence, and the 136 lack of fresh water on these islands, I was impressed with the personal cleanliness of the Lauans. Men, women and children bathe daily in the lagoon, usually at sundown before the evening meal. This is done in spite of the danger of sharks which are common in these waters. Children are [868] taught from babyhood to keep a keen lookout for their dark menacing forms, which are occasionally seen darting about in the lagoon right up to the shore line.